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REMARKS

Applicant is grateful to the Examiner for this opportunity to correct and clarify the presentation of the previous Amendment.

Independent claim 10 is amended herein to delete the phrase in step (F) that had recited that the stream of nitrogen-rich gas could be fed "into said burn out zone". As amended, step (F) requires this stream to be fed into said means for feeding secondary air into said combustion device.

With this amendment, claim 10 and claims 11-20 dependent from claim 10 are distinguished from U.S Patent No. 4,586,443 ("Burge") cited in the most recent Office Action, since neither Burge nor U.S. Patent No. 6,282,901 ("Marin") cited in that Action teach or suggest such a feature. The rejection of the claims in that Office Action is again respectfully traversed.

The Office Action argued that Burge discloses adding nitrogen to the air stream with which the fuel is mixed before the fuel is fed to the combustor, and that the rejected claims recited that the nitrogen-enriched stream could be fed to the "primary air".

The previous amendments herein to claims 1 and 10, together with the amendment made herein to claim 10, distinguish this teaching of Burge by deleting the feature that the nitrogen-enriched stream could be fed into the primary air.

Burge and Marin do not suggest such a feature. The unobviousness of this feature of applicant's claimed method as now set forth in the claims is strengthened by noting that Burge's addition of nitrogen to the fuel could be for

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purposes of "inerting" the coal, to inhibit premature combustion, whereas applicant's feature (in claims 1-10, step (E), and claims 11-20, step (F)) of feeding the nitrogen-enriched stream at the secondary air would not be suggested for that purpose.

Since neither Burge nor Marin discloses or suggests a feature that is required by applicants' amended claims 1-20 (specifically feeding the nitrogen-enriched stream to the means for feeding the secondary air), it follows that claims 1-20 are not obvious.

The rejection of claims 8 and 17 based on Burge in view of Marin and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,257,763 ("Reed"), and the rejection of claim 19 based on Burge in view of Marin and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,809,910 ("Svensson") are also overcome for the same reasons, especially now that claim 10 has been fully properly amended in step (F) to delete feeding the nitrogen-rich gas stream into said burn out zone.

For all the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that pending claims 1-20 as amended can and should be allowed.

Respectfully submitted,

*Donald T. Black*  
Donald T. Black  
PTO Reg. No. 27,999  
Attorney for Applicants

Praxair, Inc.  
39 Old Ridgebury Rd.  
Danbury, CT 06810  
(203) 837-2669  
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